

Performance & Quality Assurance Update

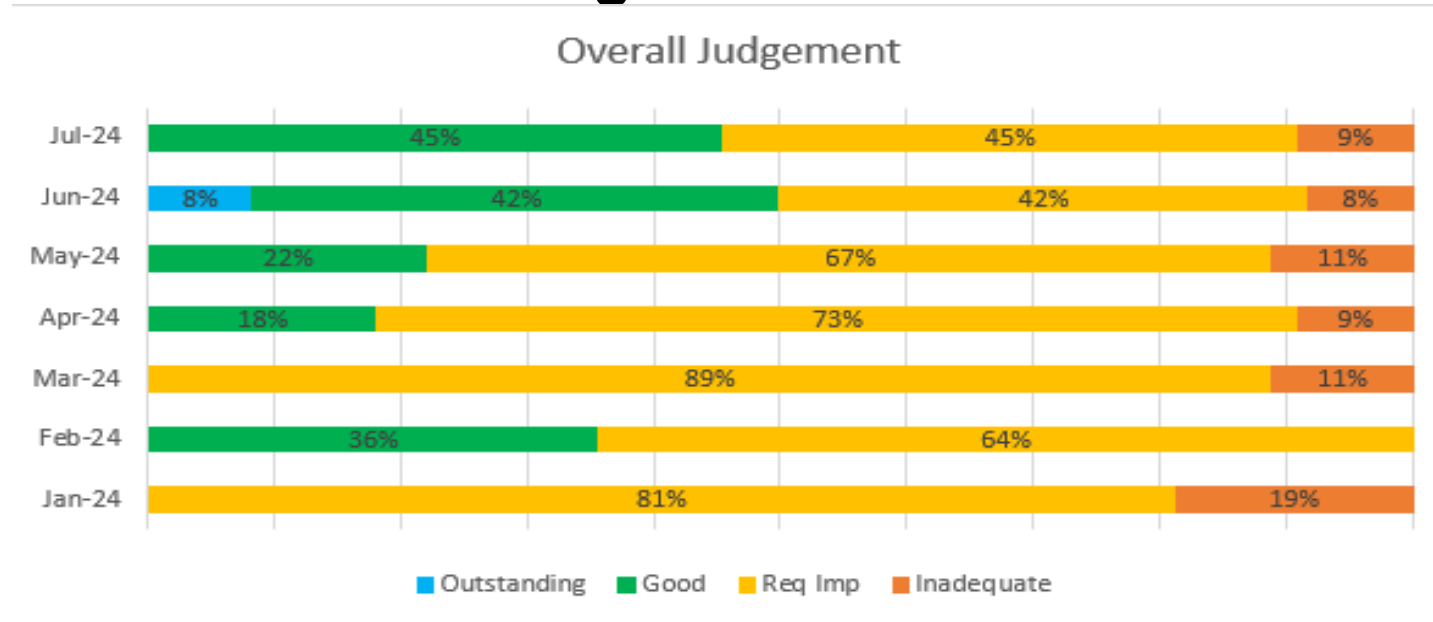
September 2024

Audits: April - July 2024 (year to date)

| Audit activity | No. files reviewed |
|--|--------------------|
| Case file audits – IRT, CST, CwD, Safeguarding, CASS, Leaving Care | 45 |
| Foster carers | 11 |

Note: audits are not completed in August & December

Headline Audit Judgements



Analysis of Overall Audit Judgements

The majority of our work is in the requires improvement category (two-thirds to three-quarters of audit judgements) although there has been positive shift in our good or better judgements in June and July. Inadequate judgements have been consistently low over the last 5 months, at 10% (usually representing just 1 audit).

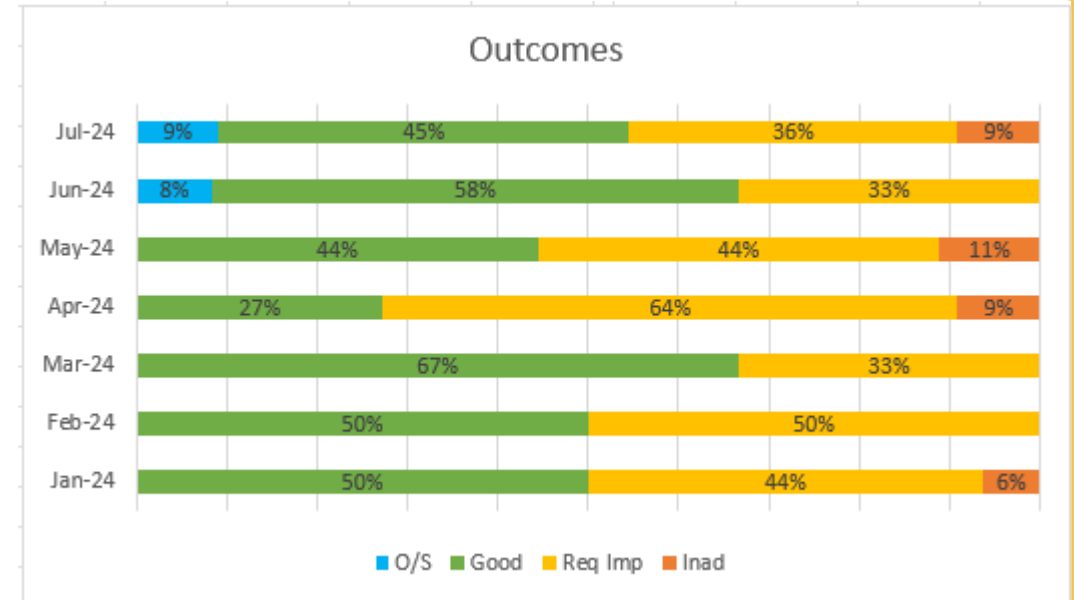
Outcomes for Children

Audit findings

Audit judgements in relation to outcomes for children are typically more positive than the overall quality of practice judgements. The overall practice judgement considers all of the different elements around both quality and compliance.

Practice analysis

We are seeing evidence that positive outcomes for children are being created by our intervention. This is based on assessed risk and need being addressed and improvements being evidenced in terms of the impact for the child. The more positive judgements reflect that positive outcomes have been achieved for a child/young person. We need to continue to improve on the consistency of compliance with practice standards and evidencing our decision making in relation to step down support.



Identification of Harm

Data

The volume of incoming work for Children's Social Care grew through the late spring into the early summer falling back during August. Changes in the operation of the MASH have had a positive impact on the speed of the flow of work for assessment and for child protection activity.

Audit findings

Judgements in relation to child safety have been mixed, ranging from a quarter to half good or better judgements each month, and in 5 of the 7 months of this year around half judged to require improvement. In the last 3 months of audits (44 audits), 2 audits have been judged inadequate and 2 outstanding.

Practice analysis

Harm and child/young people's experiences are being identified and information gathered as part of the MASH screening and in subsequent Child and Family Assessments being completed. Assessments are increasingly being completed within timescales, although more proportionate assessments are needed in some cases to ensure planning commences more quickly. Strategy Meetings and subsequent s.47 enquiries are being completed where significant harm is being identified. There has been an improvement in the timeliness of strategy meetings over the quarter. The quality of the recording of s.47 enquiries needs to fully reflect the assessment undertaken and the decisions made.

Assessment

Data

Timeliness of assessments continues to improve – 83% for the past 3 months - and there are signs of more proportionate and timely assessments being completed.

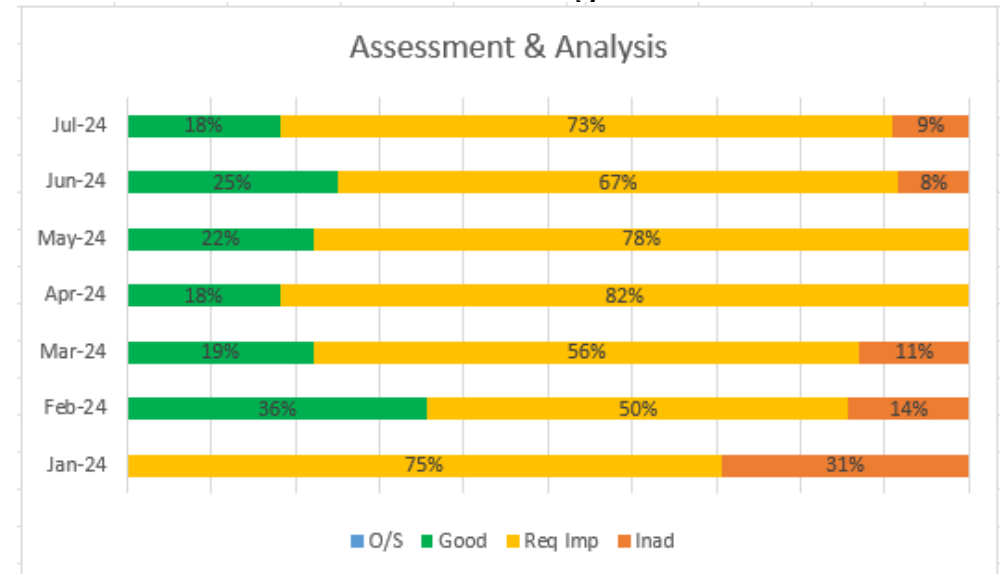
Audit findings

There has been an improvement in the quality of assessments seen through audit, with a reduction in inadequate judgements and a fifth have been judged good consistently since Spring.

Practice analysis

Assessment highlights risk/need and provides evidence to support this. Child/young person's voice is usually present within assessment and to achieve more good audit judgements

we need to better evidence the voice of children is informing plans. Assessments would be further strengthened if there was greater analysis of the capacity of parents/carers to make the changes needed to safely meet the needs of their children. Analysis needs to reflect capacity to change and what outcomes are needed.



Child Protection Enquiries

Data

Longitudinal analysis shows that the number of strategy discussions and child protection enquiries has steadied and settled around the national average and the average for similar local authorities – albeit with a bit of a rise through the early part of summer.

Performance data suggests that the timeliness of key aspects of child protection activity has improved, with the time taken from strategy discussion to initial child protection conferences particularly strong.

Recent analysis of the time from referral to strategy discussion and the involvement of key partners in those strategy discussions also shows improvement – something that the shift to the new MASH model has helped and supported.

- The median time to complete Section 47 enquiries is 13 days, with 79% completed within 15 days.
- 92% of ICPCs in 2024/5 have been held within 15 days of strategy discussion. 95% of all ICPCs relating to new referrals were in time.

Plans and Planning

Data

Performance data suggests strengthening quality of planning and support for children in care, with improving stability in their homes and a higher number leaving care through adoption and other types of permanence.

Data around children in family court proceedings and at the end of proceedings also points to better planning, with fewer children subject to interim care orders placed at home with parents; and no child concluding proceedings with a care order placed at home with parents in the last 12 months. More children are also concluding proceedings without remaining in public care.

There are also signs of lengthening periods of support for children with both CIN and CP plans and the proportion of children entering care having previously been subject to pre-proceedings remains relatively small.

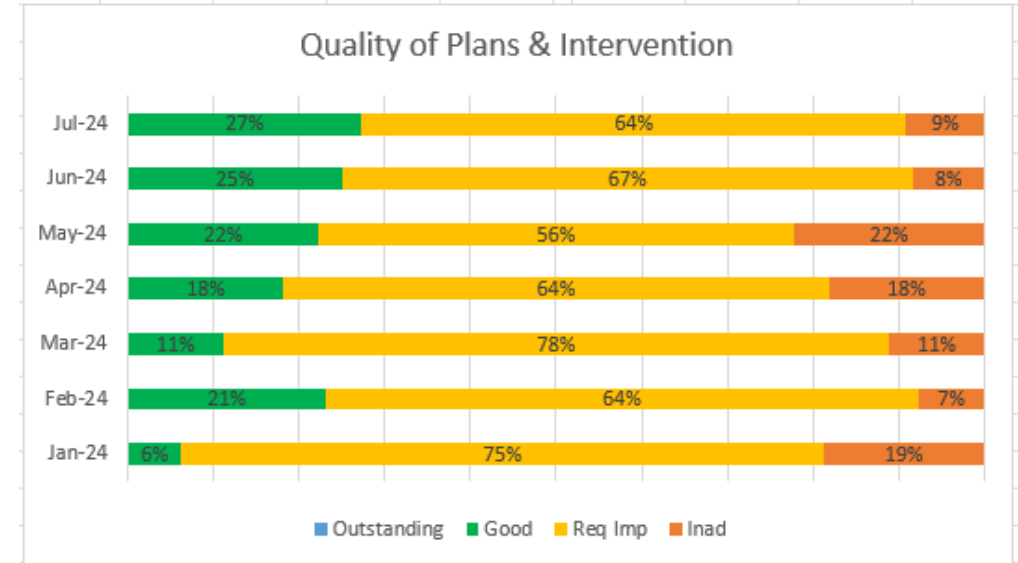
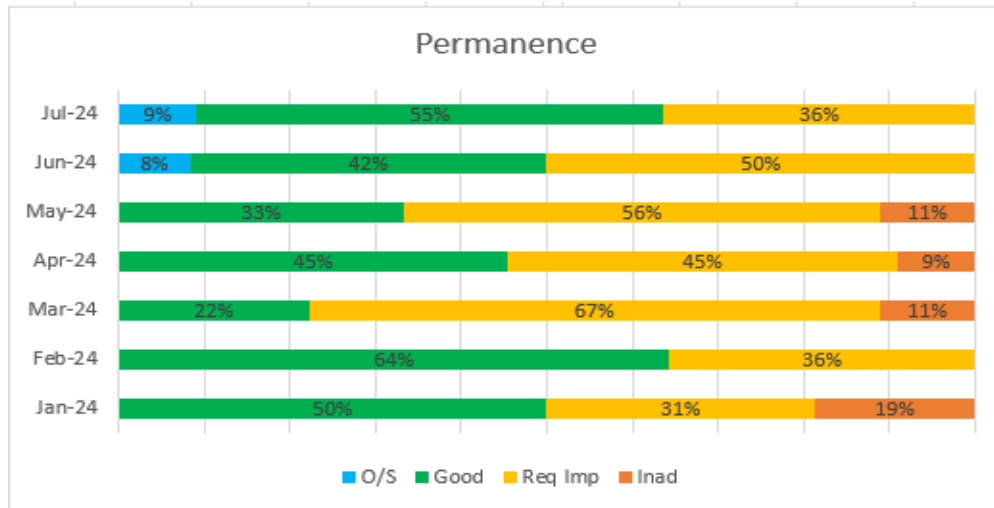
A small number of young children in care are placed in residential homes, rather than family homes– highlighting local and national sufficiency issues.

A small number of children have placement orders, but are waiting for an adoption placement.

While we are seeing good progress for younger care leavers around engagement with education, employment and training, the engagement of older care leavers (19-to-21-year-olds) remains an area for improvement.

Audit findings

There are some signs that quality of plans is improving, with 22% judged good in Q4 compared to 13% in Q3. The shift is from those moving from the requires improvement category to the good, with inadequate judgements accounting for 1 or 2 audits per month since February. Permanence planning is good in half of the Q4 audits (41% requires improvement) but dropped to 41% in quarter 1 (with 50% requires improvement). There have been 2 examples of outstanding permanence planning in the last 2 months.



Practice analysis

We are seeing some positive outcomes being achieved for our children and young people. We do see plans that are not supporting a clear path for children, young people, and families to achieve these positive outcomes. Plans need to set timescales, address assessed risks/need, show what outcomes are desired and set actions that are co-produced and support change.

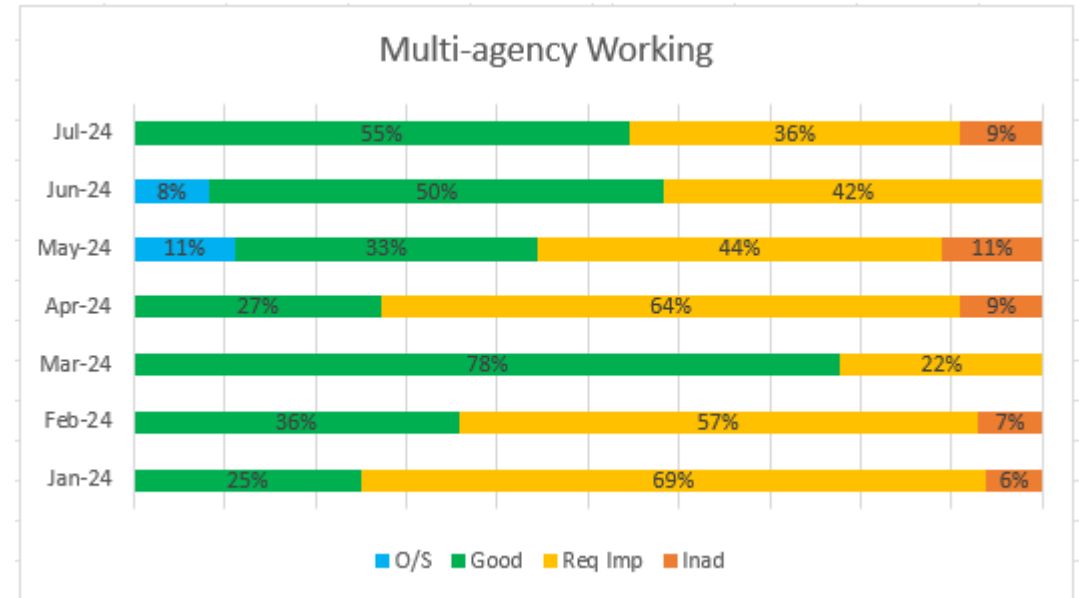
Multi-Agency Working

Audit findings

Multi-agency working was judged 41% good in Q4 and 38% good in Q1 (with 6% outstanding), reflecting an improved picture.

Practice Analysis

There is some good evidence of partnership working to support children and families. The right professionals are attending meetings and contributing to improving outcomes. Where professionals are not able to attend a meeting, we need to see more evidence that updates have been provided and agreed actions are shared. Where multi-agency working works best, the multi-agency support is regularly reviewed in well attended meetings and evidenced in timely assessment and planning, providing a strong team of support around the family. Parents/carers are part of this group and are contributing to planning and change.



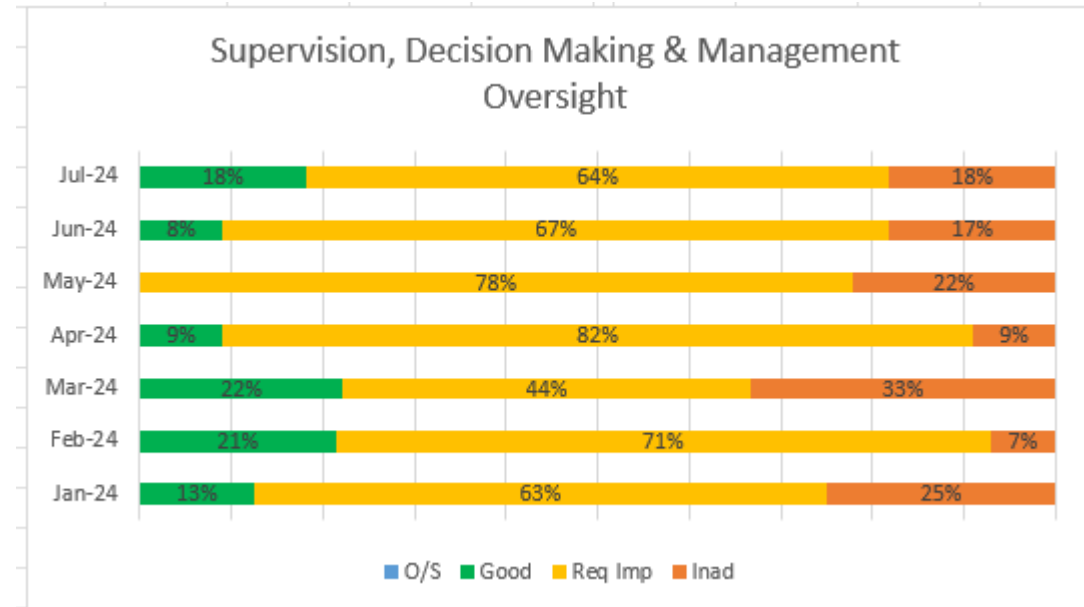
Supervision, Decision Making & Management Oversight

Audit findings

We have seen fewer good judgements in relation to supervision, decision making and management oversight this quarter although inadequate judgements over the same period have been relatively steady reflecting more work in the requires improvement category.

Practice analysis

We are seeing improvements in the timeliness of supervision over the last quarter and managers have a better insight into performance and required practice. To improve the quality of practice we need to see social workers being offered a greater opportunity to reflect on a child/young person's plan and circumstances, review their safety and set actions that make a meaningful change to a child or young person's lived experiences/outcomes.



Workforce – Caseloads, Recruitment & Retention, Consistent Relationships

Data

Caseloads have decreased to just over 19, with significant variation between service areas: CASS at 14, IRT at 18 and Family Safeguarding at 24.5. The caseloads for Family Safeguarding are a particular concern, as the model is predicated on caseloads of 17 children per social worker or less.

There is also variation between newly qualified and experienced workers, with the former being protected, which leads to higher-than-average caseloads for the latter.

The service overall remains too dependent on agency staff (over 40% of frontline professionals), with IRT and Family Safeguarding more dependent than CASS.

External recruitment has been steady: running at 10 to 12 per 6-month period, but this has been offset by 6 to 8 permanent workers in the same teams leaving over the same timeframe. This, combined with the significant increase in the establishment explains the continued dependence on agency workers. International recruitment was slower than expected and has not provided the injection of additional staff initially envisaged.

All of the above poses challenges for relationship-based practice, with less than half of children open to the service for longer than 6 months having the same worker for the past 6 months; and only a quarter open for a year or longer having the same worker for the past year.

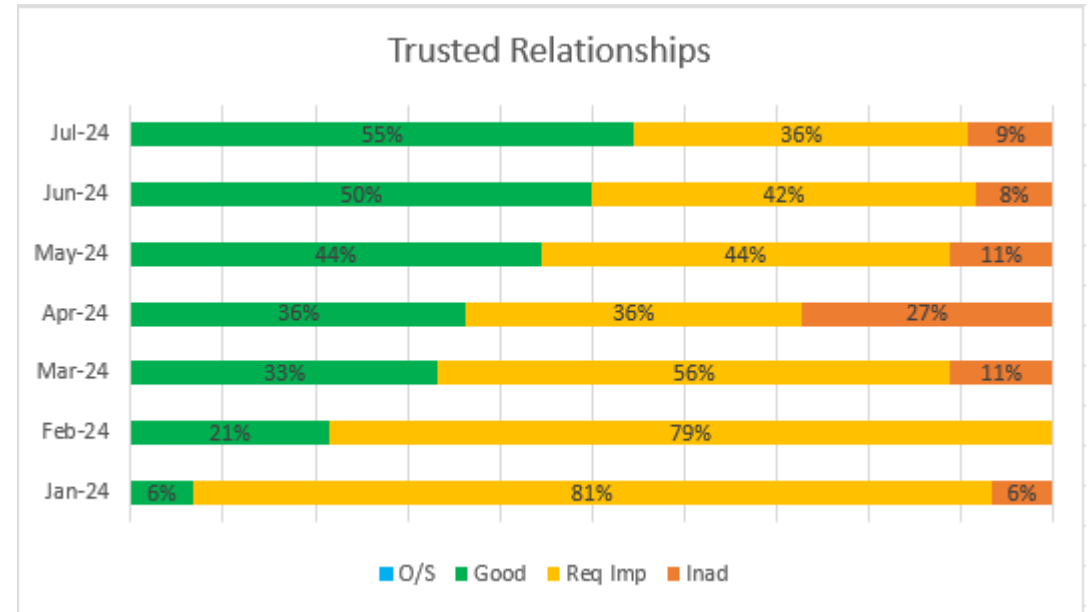
Consistent Relationships

Audit findings

The percentage of good judgements is steadily increasing month on month in relation to trusted relationships. There was a spike in the inadequate audits in April with 27% (3 audits) judged inadequate in this area.

Practice analysis

We are seeing some good evidence that we are building trusted relationships with families. The feedback we receive from contacting parents/carers is evidencing this where change has been made. There is some evidence to suggest that Fathers and wider family are being spoken to more, but this needs to happen routinely, and their views recorded.



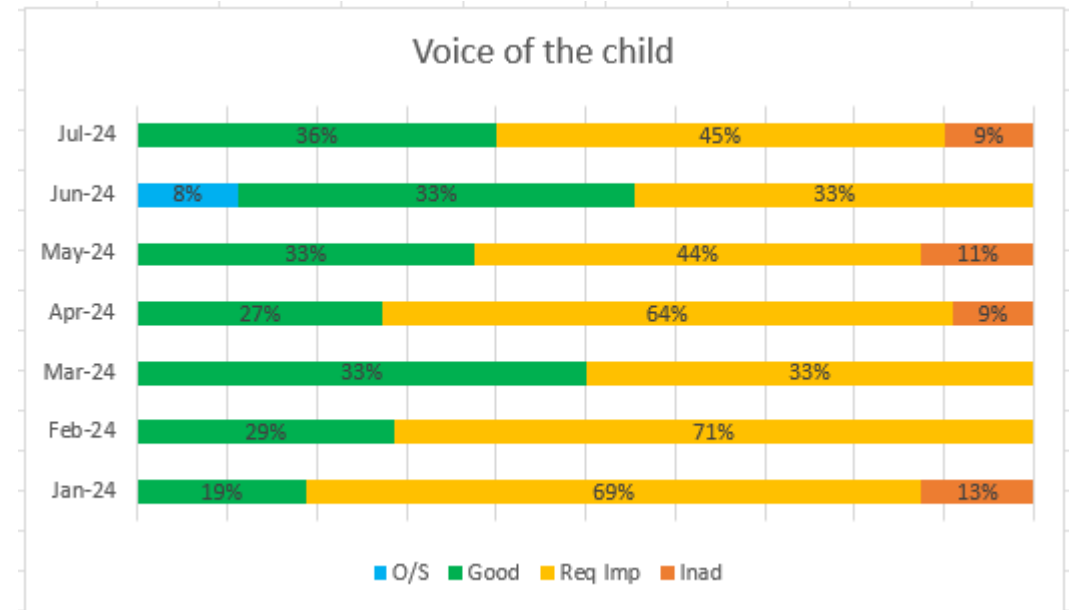
Voice

Audit findings

Voice of the child was judged good in 26% of audits in Q4, rising to 31% in Q1.

Practice analysis

We can evidence that we are building trusting relationships with our children but we are not always showing that we understand children and young people's lived experiences and this needs to be better evidenced in assessments and plans. We also need to ensure that our safety plans are co-produced with children/young people, as that is currently not consistently clear.



Fostering

- A steady proportion of children in care are in foster homes (69%) and over 72% of those in care long-term living with foster carers have been with the same council-approved foster carer for the past 2 years.
- We have seen growth in the number of new in-house carers over the past year, with a larger than regional average number of new carers recruited after the changes made to the payment & rewards for carers.
- There is an improving picture of practice with some elements of outstanding practice discussed within recent audits.
- Fostering standards are usually being met within the Service. The supervision and support being offered to foster carers is ensuring that carers can meet these standards. Challenge is provided, where support is needed for these standards to be met by foster carers.
- Purposeful supervision of foster carers and supervising social workers is provided with some reflections noted and reviewing of plans.
- The recording of child/young person's voices and lived experiences is variable and is an area to strengthen our practice, to understand how foster homes meet our children/young people's needs.

EDT Dip sampling

Monthly EDT Dip Sampling from the EDT Team Manager for March – May 2024 is showing that:

- EDT action is safeguarding children (and adults) through the interventions being provided.
- There is evidence of good multi-agency working to provide advice and support.
- EDT intervention is generally recorded well but some records would need more detail to evidence work completed more effectively.
- Where there is a need for an AMHP, this support needs to be offered more consistently and the recording of this intervention/assessment to be recorded.
- Timescales for intervention are being met.

Current areas of focus

- Continued, relentless focus on the Bury Commitments with **tighter performance management of the basics**. Expectation that team managers provide a weekly commentary for review by HoS, Director and Exec Director providing a narrative to the weekly performance reports and identifying the actions being taken to address any areas of under-performance. These reports also form the basis of fortnightly Performance & QA SMT meetings (chaired by Director).
- Continue to **monitor the impact of changes in the MASH** (system/pathways) and the introduction of the 4-week duty cycle in IRT, to ensure that we understand the impact of changes made and that changes are being embedded.
- **Pause implementation of the Family Safeguarding workbook** to enable practitioners to focus on the cornerstones of good practice, providing a firm foundation to then re-launch the workbook at a later date.
- Engage **additional capacity in Family Safeguarding** – introducing an additional service manager post to lead on supporting practice development and embedding family safeguarding across the service.
- **External recruitment partner** appointed to work across Adults and Children's with a focus on brand and advertising, creating a buzz about Bury in the medium term.
- Working with Housing colleagues to **tighten up co-ordination and planning of accommodation for care leavers**, with key policy documents now agreed
- Impact on the lived experience of families - we have created an **online questionnaire** to be completed by parents/carers, asking qualitative questions about the impact of our intervention and our relationships with families. This is seeking to increase the volume of feedback and enable us to use this as key indicator of quality of practice and progress. This is now piloted in the Safeguarding Unit post-conference/review.

Feedback from children and families

- Examples where we have been getting it right:
 - Feedback from young person: *When I call him and he answers, and if he is busy he will call me back, I ask him about something and he sorts it out, he gets things done. I feel he listens to me, he gets back to me ..it is better.*
 - Feedback from parent: *'Enjoyed the experience of assessment – just telling you about me, didn't mind at all. Nothing was not right. Just told her what it was. A good assessment – we looked forward to her coming every week. we were always waiting for her to come!'*
 - Feedback from foster carer: *The support we receive from the fostering service is good. We have always had consistent SSW's and we have a good relationship with Laura who is visiting today.*
 - *[The PA] spent a huge amount of time and took Y to various appointments with different housing officers. [PA] had to get medical reports and all sorts of reports to get Y his accommodation. It is not easy getting supported accommodation and [PA] did it.*
 - Feedback from parent: *[The SW} is a really a good social worker, she is the best one I have had to be far. SW has my back all of the time in the Core Group Meetings. Some people (professionals) do not see me at all, they attend and give their views which can be negative towards me. Cassie will address this with professionals and highlight their lack of understanding about my family, she is polite about this but will make it clear it is not fair to judge us. I can talk to SW, I feel at ease with her in situations which are nerve racking, she will always tell me what she has written in reports in preparation for conferences. SW is advocating for my children to be taken off a Child Protection Plan.*
- Examples of where we need to do better:
 - *Better communication. Left text messages and emails but have had no response over the course of weeks. This has been the same for other professionals.*
 - Feedback from parent: *I said in a recent Child in Need Meeting, my children are struggling to build a relationship as there has been numerous changes, there is no consistency... I would like my children to build a bond and trust to speak about things that are bothering them, my children are feeling like what is the point.*
 - Feedback from family: *Meetings were often being arranged but then were changed very last minute, sometimes on the actual day. This makes me feel rubbish and as though we do not matter, it is making us feel like we do know where to turn or get support which is even more difficult when you can't get hold of your Social Worker.*